

# Researchers just captured 3 huge 'alligator snapping turtles'

August 27 2020, by Madeleine Marr, Miami Herald

---

Two words: Whoa, Nelly.

A brave research crew from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission captured three massive and scary looking turtles late last week near Gainesville, [according to a Facebook post](#).

The reptiles are a newly discovered [species](#): the Suwannee alligator snapping turtle, also known as *Macrochelys suwanniensis*, said the agency.

"Formerly, the alligator snapping turtle (*Macrochelys temminckii*) was considered a single, wide-ranging species that extended from the Suwannee River drainage west into Texas," read the FWC post.

"(E)veryone agrees that the Suwannee species is distinct. The Suwannee alligator snapping turtle has been isolated for at least 5.5 million years, during which time it has undergone sufficient evolutionary changes to differentiate it from other alligator snapping turtles."

According to the Florida Natural Areas Inventory research center at Florida State University, these reptiles can reach "immense proportions," an [adult male](#) can grow as large as two and half feet long, weighing in at more than 200 pounds. They can live up to about 100 years old.

Like all snapping turtles, it has a rough brown shell and [long tail](#); an "exceptionally large," triangular head; hooked beak; and strong jaw

(hence, the [alligator](#) reference).

FWC said in the post that is helping to "document the distribution and relative abundance of this state threatened species." Their numbers have dwindled due to "unregulated harvesting and habitat loss."

Six hoop-net traps were set in the New River, a blackwater stream with low biological productivity, said the agency, "so finding a large turtle in such a small stream is unusual."

In one trap, they caught a big boy, a 100-pound male.

Also, um, snapped up: a 46-pound female and a 64-pound male.

The [turtles](#), estimated to be between 40 and 80 years old, were released back into the wild after data were collected.

If you see one, you may want to continue social distancing.

Commenters on the FWC's post were duly awed.

"Oh my Goodness!"

"Gorgeous."

"Holy crap!"

"Amazing animals."

©2020 Miami Herald

Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Researchers just captured 3 huge 'alligator snapping turtles' (2020, August 27) retrieved

23 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-08-captured-huge-alligator-snapping-turtles.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.